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How Murderous 'Hook' Went Free

WHAT CASTRO WANTED

From the Herald Tribune Bureau
WASHINGTON

It was James B. Donovan and not Fidel Castro who suggested that Francisco (the Hook) Molina del Rio and the three Cuban saboteurs be released in return for the freeing of the remaining Americans in Cuban jails.

This was reported yesterday by an able source. Previously Justice Department sources had said that Premier Castro had expressed an interest in the four men being held in

gasted that amnesty might be obtained for Molina and the three indicated saboteurs—Roberto Santiesteban Casanova, Marino Antonio Esteban del Carmen Suenro y Cabrera, and Jose Garcia Orellano.

In fact, of course, this amnesty would be conditional upon Castro's granting amnesty to the Americans. Castro was interested, particularly in the freeing of Molina. Molina was serving a 20-year-to-life sentence as the slayer of a Venezuelan girl in a New York restaurant political brawl during Castro's visit to the United Nations in 1960.

Called Political Prisoner

In Cuba, Mr. Donovan discovered, there was more interest about Molina's plight than about the plight of the saboteurs. He was regarded as a political prisoner, and Castro was eager to have him released.

Mr. Donovan, it was learned, got the idea during his experience, earlier this year, in the one-for-one swap negotiated with the East Germans.

Under this agreement, the United States released a Cuban prisoner, Abel Sanchez, in exchange for the release of the American Gary Powers, who was held by the Russians after being shot down in a plane over the Soviet Union last year.

In that swap, the American operation was a success.

New York State and that the swap had resulted.

According to the version obtained yesterday, this is what happened:

Mr. Donovan, the New York lawyer who first negotiated the release last December of 1,113 Cubans captured at the Bay of Pigs, was back in Havana again last January. In discussing with Castro the possibility of getting some 20-odd Americans out of Cuban prisons, Mr. Donovan sug-



Associated Press

THEIR HAPPIEST DAY—James Donovan, center, receives the warm thanks of two of the 21 Americans he won freedom for yesterday. At left is Leonard L. Schmidt, of Chicago, and, right, is George R. Beck Jr., of Noron, Mass.

gested he propose a similar arrangement to Castro, the Cuban dictator was definitely interested. On his return to Washington, Mr. Donovan sounded out Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy and he agreed to go along.

The Attorney General had no problem with respect to the saboteurs because they were held by Federal authorities. The Justice Department

must the indictments. Molina, on the other hand, was a N. Y. State prisoner, and the Attorney General had to persuade Gov. Rockefeller to release him.

The Governor agreed, but he refused to permit any announcement by Mr. Kennedy or anyone else until Molina was actually delivered to Federal authorities. The Governor, according to informa-

tion, might stir up demonstration in New York.